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A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE AND TEACHINGS.



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NANAK.

INTRODUCTION

 F the several religious sects that arose in mediæval India, none has attracted greater attention or been more widely studied than the school of Sikhism founded by the Khatri mystic and poet, Nanak. The political and military greatness, to which as a nation the Sikhs attained in latter days, is to some extent at the bottom of this widespread admiration and study. The achievements in war and politics which the small community of the Sikhs made in the short space of a century and a half or two, are indeed some of the most remarkable and brilliant that have ever been recorded of any small and brave community in the world. But the political and military story apart, the Sikh religion, founded on the hymns and teachings of one of the gentlest and most mystical of mediæval Indian teachers, is interesting and valuable as one of the purest protestant faiths that arose in the middle ages in India.

Discarding all superstitions that had accumulated in the course of centuries, the Sikh religion established the worship of the "One Great and True Being." It condemned pilgrimages and rites and temple-worship as not only useless but as a hindrance to true religion, and preached in their place of a pure and ennobling worship by means of prayer and true love and good, virtuous acts. It gave a high place to ethics and morality. Equality of human rights was also established, none being high or low in the eyes of God. The social and reforming effects of a religion like this could not but be great. A rude and scattered community of peasants and hillmen became a strong and well-knit brotherhood united by a common and ennobling faith. A race of primitive and untutored men became a heroic nation, possessed of a strong and individual religious faith, and fired with ideals of moral courage and independence.

The chronicles of the life of the original founder, Nanak, are numerous. The earliest chronicle may be said to be almost contemporary, being written in the time of one of the early gurus. The latter chronicles were but amplifications of this early one, too often orna-

mented with extraordinary legends and miracles. The sketch given in the following pages is based upon the earlier chronicle, translated fully by Dr. A. D. Trumpp in his book, the *Adi Granth*. The story is told with a great deal of simplicity and truth, and forms very commendable and interesting reading.

NANAK'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, was born in the month of Baisakh (April—May) 1469 A. D. in the village of Talwandi, Lahore District, the Punjab. He was a Khatri by caste. His father was Kalu, the accountant of the village, who also pursued the life of an agriculturist ; and his mother was Tripta, memorable in Sikh writings for her devotion to her son. Nanak appears even in his childhood to have been of a mystic disposition and much given to contemplation. He was early put to school ; but he often surprised his schoolmaster and parents by his queer acts and utterances and occasional sallies of free-thought. The Khatri father was put to much concern at the spiritual prepossessions and mystic brooding spirit of his son and tried to break him of his religious habits. He set the youth to various secular tasks—to the

looking after the cultivation of the fields, to the carrying on of a little trade. But Nanak proved averse to them all. He paid little attention to his father's admonition or persuasion. He began to pass more and more of his time in religious contemplation and practices. He gathered a few friends around himself, and with them sang and composed hymns in praise of the Creator.

Under the stress of this life of physical and mental exertion, Nanak's health too seems to have been affected somewhat. The loving parents sent for a physician. Nanak accosted the physician with a mystic outburst :

"The physician is sent for to prescribe a remedy :
he taketh my hand and feeleth my pulse.

The ignorant physician knoweth not that it is
in my mind that the pain is.

Physician, go home: take not my curse with thee.

I am imbued with my Lord ; to whom givest thou medicine ?

When there is pain, the physician standeth ready with a store of medicine.

The body is weeping, the soul crieth out
"Physician, give none of thy medicine.

Physician, go home, *few know my malady.*

The Creator, who gave me this pain, will remove it.'

* * * *

I—feel first the pain of separation from God,
then pang of hunger for contemplation on Him.

I also feel the pain which Death's powerful
myrmidons may inflict. I feel pain that my body
shall perish by disease.

O ignorant physician! give me no medicine,

Such medicine as thou hast, my friend, removeth not the pain I feel or the continued
suffering of my body.

I forgot God and devoted myself to pleasure:
then this bodily illness befell me: the wicked
heart is punished.

Ignorant physician, give me no medicine. As
sandal is useful when it exhaleth perfume,

As man is useful as long as he hath breath in
his body,

So when the breath departeth, the body crumbleth away and becometh useless:

No one taketh medicine after that. When
man possesseth even a portion of the Name of the
Bright One,

His body shall become like gold and his soul be
made pure:

All his pain and disease shall be dispelled ;
 And he shall be saved, Nanak, by the True
 Name."

NANAK'S EDUCATION

Though some of the mystics and the reformers of this epoch were unlettered men, Nanak cannot be strictly classed with them. In his village school to which he was sent in his childhood, he should have learnt the elements of reading and writing, and something of Hindi and his native dialect. His poems, which are written in a Hindi dialect prevalent at the time, reveal Nanak's acquaintance with, and good mastery of, this language. There is also proof from the internal evidence of his own compositions that Guru Nanak had studied the Persian language. Rai Bular promised that, if Nanak learned Persian, in which all State documents and accounts were then written, he would appoint him village accountant in succession to his father. Nanak, like other Hindus of the time, might therefore have applied himself to the study of the same. There are numerous Persian words and some Persian verses of the Guru found in the *Granth* and it may be accepted as a fact that he became a fair Persian scholar. It is also highly probable that

his mysticism and divine love may have been kindled and inspired to some extent by the great works of the Sufi mystics in the Persian literature.

The real culture and education of Nanak should however be looked for in another quarter. All that he learnt from the school and the books was little, compared with what he should have learnt in his wanderings wherein he met with large numbers of the contemporary bhaktas and preachers. The names of the men with whom Nanak associated are lost to us. The company of these men, along with his own undisturbed communings with Nature, with his own soul and with the Creator, should have filled him with those great spiritual ideas and intuitions which led him to found a great sect. The voice that had already spoken to many a seer and mystic of Northern India now again became vocal to the Khatri youth of Talwandi.

MARRIAGE AND EMPLOYMENT

Nanak had a sister, Nanaki by name. She was married to one Jai Ram, an *amil* or collector of revenue under the Mahomeden Governor, employed at Sultanpur. Nanak also was married soon after his sister's marriage. His wife was

Sulakhani, daughter of Mula, a resident of Batala in the present District of Gurdaspur. Two sons were born to Nanak. Marriage and the birth of children however failed to divert Nanak. Paying no regard to his household, he still daily betook to the woods and lonely places, and, there in the company of his friends, prayed and sang hymns to the Creator. Jai Ram, during his yearly official visits to Talwandi, had ample opportunities of cultivating Nanak's acquaintance and appreciating his qualities. Rai Bular too, the Zemindar of Talwandi, was an advocate of Nanak. It was therefore agreed between them that the thoughtful youth was being ill-treated by his father ; and Jai Ram promised to cherish him and find him occupation at Sultanpur. The thought of Government employ for his son filled the father Kalu's heart with joy and he gladly parted with his son. Jai Ram introduced Nanak as an educated man to the Governor, Daulat Khan, who appointed him store-keeper and gave him a dress of honour as a preliminary of service. Nanak began to apply himself to his duties and everybody was gratified and pleased with his work. Out of the provisions which Guru Nanak was allowed—for State salary was then given in kind—he devoted only a small

portion to his own maintenance'; the rest he gave away to the poor.

The minstrel, Mardana, came from Talwandi and became Nanak's private servant, friend and companion in devotion. He used to accompany Nanak on the rebec when the latter sang. Other friends too followed for whom Nanak found employment under the Governor. When their work for the day was over, Nanak and his friends, Mardana the rebec-player being the chief of them, repaired to some neighbouring solitude and there spent their time in singing and prayer.

ASCETICISM AND WANDERINGS

Nanak, however, could not rest happily in his secular life. He resolved to devote himself to his mission. He abandoned his service, and, having distributed his earthly goods amongst the poor, took up his abode in the jungle and assumed the garb and manner of life of a fakir. Here he practised all the austerities of his holy calling and began to give utterance to those inspired songs, afterwards collected and preserved in the *Adi Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikhs. His sole companion was his faithful servant and disciple, Mardana, who attended him in all his subsequent wanderings. Mardana was a skilled musician, and

morning and evening sang his master's songs to the accompaniment of the rebec.

Nanak however did not remain long in the neighbourhood of Sultanpur. He began to wander forth among the various cities of Northern India and even outside India, teaching his gospel, making disciples and disputing with the holy men of every caste and creed. He first proceeded to Saiyidpur in the Gujranwal District where he stayed in the house of Lalo, the carpenter. He next went to Kurukshetra and Hardwar in the latter of which took place an interesting episode which throws light on Nanak's protestant spirit and hatred of superstition. The Brahmans and pilgrims were offering ablutions of water with their faces turned towards the east. Nanak went amongst them, and, taking large handfuls of water, threw them in the direction of the west. The Brahmans were surprised and asked Nanak as to what he meant. Nanak asked them "What is your object, please?" They replied "We are offering ablutions unto the manes." "Where are they?" queried Nanak. The Brahmans replied "Thousands of miles away." Nanak rejoined, "My village is situate in the west. When I left it, my

fields were dry for want of rain. So I throw water towards the west. If your handfuls of water can reach the manes thousands of miles away, why not mine reach the fields lying sometimes of miles off?" .

Nanak then went to Brindaban and to Benares where he seems to have disputed with the worshippers of the various Hindu divinities. It is recorded that, at Benares, Nanak converted a Brahman Pundit by name Chatur Das to his faith. He then travelled to Puri and even farther south as far as Ceylon, and returned to his native place *after an absence of twelve years.*

Nanak is also credited with a journey to Mecca and the western countries. In all there seem to have been four principal "wanderings."

BABER'S INVASION

During his second wandering, while Nanak was at Saiyidpur, news of Baber's invasion reached the city. Mardana was seized with anxiety and spoke of it to the master. Some days after, Baber came and assaulted and sacked the city. Nanak and Mardana were seized and imprisoned and placed under the custody of Mir Khan, an officer of Baber's army. The ascetic captives were condemned to do work ; Nanak carried loads on his head,

while Mardana was forced to work with the broom. While the two were thus at work, some women were being driven along shrieking and weeping ; Mardana turned to his master and he sang :—

“They who wore beautiful tresses and the partings of whose hair were dyed with vermillion,

Have their locks now shorn with the scissors
and dust is thrown upon their heads.

They dwelt in private chambers, now they
cannot find a seat in public.

Hail ! Father, Hail ! O Primal Being, Thy
limit is not known. Thou makest and beholdest
the different phases of existence.

* * * *

They had hundreds of thousands waiting
on them while sitting, and hundreds of thou-
sands waiting on them while standing. Eating
cocoanuts and dates, they sported on their couches.

But now chains are on their necks and broken
are their strings of pearls.

The wealth and beauty which afforded them
pleasure have now become their bane.

The order was given to the soldiers to take and
dishonour them.

If it please God, He giveth greatness : and if it please Him, He giveth punishment.

If they had thought of Him before, why should they have received punishment ?

But they had lost *all* thought of God in joys, in spectacles and in pleasures.

When Baber's rule was proclaimed, no Pathan prince ate his food.

Some lost their five times of prayer, others their honour of worship.

How shall Hindu women now bathe and apply their frontal marks without their sacred squares ?

They who never thought of Ram are not now allowed even to mention Khuda.

One may return to her home ; another may meet and inquire after the safety of a relation. But others are destined to sit and weep in pain.

What pleaseth God, O Nanak, shall happen—What is man ?"

This was the time when the new Vaishnavite faith of South India was being vigorously propagated by various South Indian monks and preachers in the several parts of Northern and Central India. A great poet and reformer had already risen ; the whole land, wherever the Hindi language was spoken, was ringing with the

impassioned lyrics and intrepid utterances of Kabir. He proclaimed the Oneness and Unity of God : he defined His Nature as Love : God, he declared, is at once Absolute, Universal, One without a second ; and also the Friend and Companion of each soul. The path to Him was simple: it lay through faith and devotion. Further, all are equal: there is none high or low with God. God is accessible to the " washerwoman and the carpenter" as well as to the " self-righteous holy man." Nanak then in his wanderings, might have imbibed this new religion, with its great simplicity, its notions of One Absolute and Loving God and equal human rights. There is no doubt that it was the tradition of this connection and indebtedness that half a century later led to the incorporation of a large number of the hymns of Kabir and other Vaishnavitē preachers in the *Granth* compiled by Arjun.

SETTLING AT KHARATPUR

Towards the close of his life Nanak laid aside the habits and garb of a fakir, and settled down with his family at Kharatpur. His friend Mardana also came to live with him ; but, wearied with travel and with years, he died a short time after settling at Kharatpur. His son succeeded to his

father's function, and assisted with his music in the prayers of Nanak to the end of the latter's life. Nanak continued to preach his gospel, and every day the *Japji* and the *Sohila*, the morning and the evening prayers, which he himself had composed, were chanted in his presence. Large numbers of followers gathered round him. He organised them all together and taught them the new faith by word and by precept. His disciples often made him offerings of coin or of kind and the old saint built almshouses and gave charities out of them. The picture that is preserved in the Sikh writings of these last days and of his teachings is a most beautiful and touching one. In spite of his increasing fame and influence, he arrogated not to himself any extraordinary greatness or power. He humbly preached to all the new religion, and said that he was himself a man among men, sinful and mortal as they were, that God was all in all and reliance on Him was the "one thing needful." "Think, pray and praise Him always. The just shall live by faith alone. A teacher hath no defence but the purity of his doctrine." He enjoined on all men to live righteously, and with brotherly love and hospitality, and to abjure all superstitions and

fear. "Falsehood is at an end ; Truth at last prevaleth : Worship not the dead, bow not to stones." At last when death drew near, he appointed one of his most sincere disciples to look after the community of the faithful that was forming, passing over his own son whom he thought unfit for the task. Nothing demonstrates the selflessness and the nobility of Nanak better than this appointment of Angad in preference to his own son. His death came at last in the year 1538 A.D. at the age of 69.

NANAK'S DESCENDANTS

Nanak's line of the Bedi clan through his younger son has been preserved to the present day. During these four hundred years, they have been held in much veneration by all the Sikhs, trusted and protected in stormy times out of regard for their ancestor. An interesting personality at the recent coronation celebration in London, says an English writer, was Baba Sir Khem Singh Bedi, K.C.I.E., one of the representatives sent from the Punjab, an old man of great influence and proved loyalty, who has stood by the British Government from the day, as he expressed it, since the line of Ranjit Singh was ended—the lineal descendant in the

fourteenth generation from the Sikh Reformer and the present head of the family. He spoke with decision for his co-religionists, of their fervid loyalty, and of their readiness to prove it again and again in the future as they had done in the past in defence of the King-Emperor and his Kingdom. Recently in the columns of a Punjab newspaper he has expressed his conviction that the political object which led the Sikhs to adopt a military life—viz., the establishment of a perfectly peaceful government and the maintenance of a rule of justice and religious toleration—has been completely realised under the benign rule of the British Government, and that the Sikhs, fully regarding that Government as a god-send, have accordingly placed themselves at its service.

SIKHISM AND ITS SOURCES

The teachings of Nanak have been considered by some to have been influenced by foreign religions and thought, and to have little in common with the doctrines and philosophy of Hinduism. The learned translator of the *Adi Granth*, Dr. Trumpp, discussing the notions embodied in Sikhism, finds in them a late echo of the old Buddhism. Other critics have gone so far as to assert that Nanak might have owed some of his

doctrines to Christian sources. Nothing however could be further from the truth. It would be misreading history and Sikhism alike to suppose that the latter was born of any extraneous influence or religion. Could one but inform oneself of the systems of thought that were current in Northern India at the time, could one but pursue the clue furnished by the names and hymns of the Hindi *Bhagabats* (Vaishnava Mystics) occurring in the *Granth*, one would find that the doctrines and teachings of Nanak, like those of the other great reformer, Kabir, to whom he bears a great similarity in character and teaching alike, were chiefly derived from the contemporary Vaishnavite schools of thought.

Kabir and Nanak no doubt differed in an important particular from the reformers of Bengal and the saints of Maharashtra. The training and ideas of the latter lay more among the orthodox traditions and learning of Hinduism. Their teachings were therefore based on the accredited scriptures and systems of the land. Kabir and Nanak, while accepting their theological and spiritual principles—their notions of God and soul and devotion—base the authority and source of their faith, not in the Shrutis and the Smritis, but

in the heart of man, its intuitions and longings. This difference in view has led to important distinctions which make the sects founded by these two men eminent in some ways. But otherwise, Sikhism and the religion of Kabirpanthis remain the most characteristic survivals of mediæval Vaishnavism.

Whether the South Indian Vaishnavism, which spread to the North through its monks and preachers, was accepted in all its technical and theological completeness by the North Indian reformers is a question which is not perhaps of interest except to the sectarian Vaishnava. What is more important, historically speaking, is that the Vaishnavite creed, spreading to the North India, became the basis of a new Religion of Love and Faith, that it gave rise to a system of ethics at once deep and exalted, that it inspired ideals of social and political freedom such as no previous faith of India had done. In the darkness and terror of the middle ages, it helped to shed a ray of light and faith on the homes and hearts of the people. In an age of oppression and foreign rule, it helped to draw men together and form them into political federations which ultimately grew into empires and republics.

The following is an analysis of the tenets of Sikhism by Dr. Trumpp : " We can distinguish a grosser and finer kind of Pantheism. The grosser Pantheism identifies all things with the Absolute, the universe in its various forms being considered the expansion of It. *The finer Pantheism on the other hand distinguishes between the Absolute and the finite Being and borders frequently on Theism.* Though God is producing all things out of Himself and is filling all, yet he remains distinct from the creatures and is not contaminated by the *Maya*, as a lotus in a pond of water remains distinct from the water surrounding it. The Supreme is in its essence Light, the All-Energising Vital Power, which, though diffused into all creatures, remains distinct from them; the material bodies are dissolved again into atoms, whereas the emanated light is re-absorbed into the Fountain of light. In this finer shade of Pantheism creation assumes the form of *Emanation* from the Supreme (as in the system of the Sufis); the atomic matter is either likewise considered co-eternal with the Absolute and immanent in It, becoming moulded into various distinct forms by the energising vigour of the Absolute; or the reality of matter is more or less denied so

that the Divine is the only real essence in all. That an Absolute Being, thus defined, cannot be a self-conscious spirit, endowed with a free will and acting according to theological principles, seems never to have struck their minds. For after the strongest pantheistic expressions, the Supreme is again addressed as a self-conscious Personality who governs all things and takes care of all creatures and with whom man endeavours to enter into personal relations. *Contradictory sentences of this kind we find a great many in the Granth.* To this personification of the Supreme it is owing that *intellectual* and *moral* qualities are frequently ascribed to Him, though, strictly speaking, there is no room for them in this system. He is called very wise, acquainted with the secrets of the hearts (or the inward Governor), not deceivable, kind to His devotees, merciful, just, etc. In other places, qualities are attributed to Him which are contradictory to each other and which clearly show that they are to be taken in a pantheistic sense." Really there can be no truer analysis than this of the doctrines of the medieval orthodox Vaishnavism.

NANAK'S RELIGION AND POETRY

"There is but one God whose name is true,

the 'Creator.' These are the first words of the *Granth Sahib* and they epitomise the teaching of the whole book. This fundamental truth, the unity of the Supreme Spirit, Nanak made the basis of his doctrine. God is One, He is the God, not of the Hindu, not of the Musulman, not of the Christian, but of mankind. Under whatever name He is worshipped—Jehovah, Allah or Ram—He is "the One, Invisible, Eternal, Uncreated". Knowledge of God is the most important of all knowledge. It is not for the Brahman alone but for all, and all have a right to seek it for themselves. Similarly the worship of God is not the exclusive privilege of the priesthood, it is a service in which every man has an equal right to participate, a duty which cannot be performed by one man on behalf of another. It must be in truth and simplicity and devotion, and needs neither incense nor burnt offerings nor sacrifice.

These notions of Godhead and true worship and service are preached in a series of most beautiful and mystic poems, the most sublime of which all is that long one, the *Japji*, composed by Nanak in his old age, and still sung by every Sikh at day-break. It is a majestic poem describing th-

unity, power and beauty of God and the need of man's devotion and love.

" Of Him, the One True Name is Om,
Creator, all-pervading He :
Devoid of hate and fear, unborn,
Undying, self-existent Lord.

He can be reached by only those
Who on the guru wait for help :
O Thou, who seekest after Him,
To Him alone thy worship give.

He in the beginning did live,
He was before Time came to be,
He, verily, existeth now,
He shall exist for evermore.

Him, I cannot by thinking know,
For ages though I think on Him :
Nor e'en by silence deep, though
I in centred self-absorption live.

The hungry* are not satisfied
'Though they obtain the universe,
And of the countless means devised,
Not one doth help in finding Him.

How shall a man the True One know ?
How shall he falsehood's barriers break ?
He can, as Nanak foreordained,
By keeping His Divine commands.

* God—hungry.

By His command which none can know,

 All bodies into being come :

By His command spring living things,

 And at His bidding glory's gained.

By His command the high, the low,

 And pain and pleasure are ordained :

By his command are some absolved,

 And some to endless births are doomed.

All subjects are to His commands,

 And no one is from them exempt :

Who His commandments understands

 Is, Nanak, from all selfness free.

Some sing His pow'r, for their's the gift,

 His bounties some who know His signs,

Some hymn His attributes, His might,

 And some, His knowledge travail-gained.

Some sing to Him, for He creates,

 And then destroys corporeal forms,

Some sing to Him, for He doth take,

 And at His pleasure gives back life.

Some sing to Him believing He

 Is manifest, yet far away,

Some praise Him for He seeth all,

 And some for He's omnipresent.

There is, indeed, no limit set

 To human speech and thoughts of Him :

By countless men in countless ways

 He is described but fruitlessly.

So lavish are His gifts that men
 Receiving them aweary grow :
 From age to age His creatures have
 Received their meat and drink from Him .

He, the Commander, ordereth
 By His decree this world's affairs
 And unconcerned, O Nanak, He,
 The Lord, exulteth in His pow'r.

True is the Lord, true is His name,
 If uttered with endless love ;
 Unceasingly men ask from Him,
 And from His hands, receive rich gifts.

What shall we offer in return
 That we may ir His Presence stand ?
 What shall we utter with our lips
 Which, hearing, He may love us well ?

At the ambrosial hour of morn
 Let us with reverence meditate
 Upon His True and Holy Name
 And also on His Majesty.

This vesture from past deeds results,
 Salvation frōm His grace Divine :
 Thus, Nanak, do we apprehend
 That He is altogether true.

* * * *

Is there a man who could describe
 The living beings He has made ?
 E'en if one could encompass this,
 How great would be the task indeed !

What power infinite is Thine !
 How beautiful Thy handiwork !
 Who has the strength to understand
 The gifts Thou on Thy creatures show'rest ?

Lo, by a single word of Thine,
 Created was the Universe,
 At Thy bidding did come forth
 Rivers and streams which none can count.

What pow'r have I Thee to describe ?
 Yea, e'en if I made to Thee
 An off'ring of myself, it would
 A fitting tribute never be.

Whate'er is pleasing unto Thee,
 That only virtuous is and good.
 And Thou alone, O Formless One,
 Art ever from all harm secure.

Countless are those who are engaged
 In ceaseless praising of Thy name,
 And countless they who love Thee well,
 And practise penances for Thee.

Countless the saints who contemplate
 Upon Thy attributes divine ;
 And countless they who love the truth
 And they who practise charity.

And countless are the heroes who
 Unflinching face the foeman's steel,
 And countless they who meditate
 On Thee in silence constantly.

What pow'r have I Thee to describe ?

Yea, even if I made to Thee,
An off'ring of myself, it would
A fitting tribute never be.

Beyond all counting are the fools

Who are with blindness sore oppressed,
And countless are the thieves and they
Who prey on others' property.

Lo, countless those who rule by force,

And cut-throats too, innumerable,
So also are the murderers.

Who shed the blood of guiltless ones.

And numberless the sinners are

Who revel in all kinds of sin,
Of liars too who roam about
With lying tongues, there is no count.

And countless are the filthy ones

Who pleasure find in loathsome food,
And countless are the slanderers
Who carry on them loads of sin.

What'er is pleasing unto Thee,

That only virtuous is and good,
And Thou alone, O formless One,
Art ever from all harm secure.

* * *

Should one defile his hands or feet,

Or other portions of his frame,
He can the stains by washing cleanse,
And from them all be freed again.

Perchance polluted be one's clothes,
 They can with water be made clean,
 But if the heart's defiled by sin,
 It can be cleansed by only Him.

Men cannot sinners be or saints
 By merely claiming to be such :
 The Cherubim who are His scribes,
 Present to Him man's roll of deeds.

Who practiseth austerities,
 Almsgiving too, and charity,
 And who resorts to holy shrines,
 Of honour but a fraction gains.

But he who hears Him and obeys,
And loves Him in his inmost heart,
Shall wash off his impurities
Within his own heart's sacred shrine.

In Thee, O Lord, all virtues dwell,
 Not even one in me is found ;
 By those devoid of virtue, Thou
 Cannot be served or worshipped.

* * * *

But 'tis beyond all human pow'r
 To make a count of all His works ;
 He is the great Lord verily,
 How great, He only, Nanak, knows.

Like streams which with the ocean blend,
 Yet nothing of its vastness know,
 So I, though praising Him always,
 Am of His greatness ignorant.

* ■ * *

How great He is, He only knows
 And by His grace and favour doth
 Bestow, O Nanak, upon men
 The gift of realising Him.

His great benevolence no pen
 Of writer ever can describe :
 A mighty giver He's indeed,
 Without a grain of avarice.

Countless the heroes who beseech
 For boundless bounties at His hands,
 And countless too are other men
 Who also beg for gifts from Him.

Countless the number is of those
 Who throw away their lives in sin :
 And countless the recipients who
 Deny the gifts they get from Him.

And countless are the well-fed fools,
 Countless the sore and hungry ones,
E'en pain and hunger are Thy gifts,
 O Giver Great and bountiful.

'Tis He the Lord who knows the needs
 Of all and gives accordingly :
 Alas ! how few are they who do
 This truth acknowledge or believe.

* * * *

Priceless Thy dealings and Thy marks,
 Priceless Thy dealers and Thy stores,
 Priceless is all that comes from Thee,
 And priceless that Thou tak'st away.

Priceless Thy love and lovers are,
 Priceless Thy Justice and Thy Courts ;
 Priceless Thy measures and Thy weights,
 Priceless Thy gifts and attributes.

Priceless Thy mercy and commands,
 How priceless Thou, no tongue can tell
 Whilst lisping ' Lord, Thou priceless art,'
 Men in devotion live for Thee.

Who read the Veds and the Purans,
 Discourse on Thee and speak of Thee,
 So also do the learned men
 Who are expounders of the truth.

The Brahmans and the Indras too
 Krishna, the Gopis fair, and Shiv,
 The Siddhs, the Buddhas, Thou hast made,
 These all unite in praising Thee.

The demons and the Shining Ones,
 The demigods and mortal men,
 Inspired saints and serving-folk
 All magnify Thy attributes.

* * * *

Where is the gate, the mansion where
 Thou dost, enthroned, watch over Thy works ?
 How countless are the harps, the songs,
 And singers and musicians there !

To Thee sing Water, Wind and Fire,
 And at Thy gates, Death's king himself,
 The seraph scribes on whose record
 Are weighed the deeds of mortal men.

To Thee with songs praise' Brahm, Shiv,
 Heav'n's Queen also with beauty crowned,
 And Indra seated on his throne
 With all his gods within Thy gates.

To Thee sing mighty warriors,
 The quarter's four whence life doth spring ;
 The continents, the worlds, the orbs,
 Which Thou hast made and dost support.

To Thee in meditation sing
 The Siddhs and contemplating saints,
 The continent, patient ones,
 Unvanquished heroes and the true.

To Thee in all the ages sing
 In Vedic hymns, sages and saints
 To Thee sing maidens who enchant
 The heart, in heav'n, on earth, in hell.

To Thee do all the jewels sing
 Which have by Thee created been ;
 To Thee in praise sing one and all
 The sacred shrines where pilgrims go.

To Thee sing those favoured by Thee,
 Thy devotees steeped in Thy Love :
 And countless others I know not,
 How can I, Nanak, name them all ?

He is ever true, the only Lord,
 His Name is true, worlds-maker He,
 He is and shall for ever be,
 He shall remain though worlds depart.



Let him who seeketh Him regard
 Contentment as his ear-ring :
 Let modesty his wallet be,
 His ashes, meditation deep.

Let him consider death his quilt,
 And faith as his mainstay in life;
 And let him keep his body pure
 (Like to a virgin undefiled).

In this wise he shall gain indeed
 The spirit of true tolerance *
 For by subjection of the mind
 Is Vict'ry gained o'er all the world

All hail to Him !—to Him all hail !
 The Primal Being and the Pure,
 Th' Immortal Lord who ne'er began,
 Who is the same from age to age.

His mercy is His almoner,
 Knowledge Divine, lo! is His food :
 His Glory is proclaimed abroad
 Through every corner of the world.

* * * *

He sees all things that He has made,
But He Himself is never seen
By any being whatsoe'er,
He, truly, is most wonderful.

* * * *

He having fashioned everything
 Upon His own works contemplates :
 The works of Him, the True One, are
 O Nanak, everlasting, sure.

* Yogic attainment.

All hail to Him ! — to Him all hail !

The Primal Being and the Pure ;
Th' Immortal Lord who ne'er began,
Who is the same from age to age.

Had I a hundred thousand tongues,
Yea, twentyfold as many more,
I then a hundred thousand times
Would tell His Name with all my tongues.

*I would in this way mount His stairs,
And, reaching Him, be one with Him :
The meanest, when they hear of Heav'n,
Are filled with longing to be there.*

O Nanak, He is realised
Only through His Own grace Divine :
Who boast of other ways and means
They idle prattlers are and false.

For silence, I no strength possess,
No strength to speak, to ask, to give,
To live, to die, to gain a crown,
To gather wealth and victories.

No strength have I to think on Thee,
Or ponder over things Divine,
Nor have I strength to find the way
Of gaining freedom for my soul.

O Nanak ! He whose arm is strength,
He sees all things and wields all pow'r ;
None in His sight is high or low
(For He regards all men alike).

He has created seasons, nights,
 The weekdays and the lunar days,
 The wind, the water and the fire,
 And also all the under-worlds.

He in the midst of these has set—
 As but a passing, resting place—
 This earth with all its living forms
 Of endless beauty, endless kinds.

According to their deeds all these
 Are judged by Him who is the Truth
 And in His Courts of Justice those
 Accepted are who're virtuous.

His Grace and Men's own deeds in life
 The basis of salvation are ;
Who wanting in purity are
 Make good the balance by His grace,

That which has been described before
 Explains the law in Virtue's realm :
 What follows, to the realm belongs
 Wherein Knowledge Divine abides—

In this domain are countless winds,
 And countless waters, countless fires,
 Krishnas and Shivas numberless,
 And Brahma who the worlds create.

Countless the ' Lands of Grace ' are there,
 Countless the Mountains, Narads, Dhrus,
 And Suns and Moons and lands and orbs,
 And Indras and the Sidhs and Naths.



Here in this realm, Knowledge Divine
 Resplendent shines (as doth the sun) :
 Here too are heard sweet songs of praise,
 And sounds of merriment and joy.

Again the realm of Happiness
 By Beauty is characterised ;
 Here forms without compare are made,
 And none its charms can e'er portray.

Here Understanding fashioned is,
 Discernment, Wisdom, Intellect,
 Here too that Knowledge comes to birth
 With which are gifted sages, saints.

Of Action's realm the attribute
 Is energy, active throughout,
 Here mighty heroes, lords of war,
 With Rama's prowess filled, abide.

* * * *

In Action's realm are also found
 Communities of devotees,
 Who are with gladness always filled,
 For in their hearts the True One dwells.

The Formless in the Realm of Truth
 Doth dwell, and on its denizens
 With eyes of kindness and of love
 Looks on, and fills them all with joy.

* * * *

Thus in the true mint I have made
 These hymns in praise of Him, the Lord :
 Such blessed work falls to the lot
 Of those to whom He gracious is.

* * * *

Of living things, behold, the wind
 The Guru is : their mother, earth.
 Their father, water ; night and day, :
 The nurse maids on whose lap they play.

Deeds, good and bad, before His throne
 Are by the king of death rehearsed :
 By their own actions some get near,
 And some stay far away from Him.

Who meditate upon His name,
 From labours freed repair to Him :
 Their faces, Nanak, shine: through them
 Salvation other people gain.”*

We have extracted this poem at full length, as it embodies to a great extent the characteristic notions and spiritual concepts of Nanak, and contains very fine and majestic poetry. The religion embodied in these stanzas is decidedly a sublime theism as known to Hinduism. God is the great Transcendent Being “the One True Name, the Creator, the All-Pervading One; the undying Self-existent Lord.” He creates and pervades all the worlds. “Countless are His Attributes ; Priceless

[* The above extracts are taken from a very beautiful translation of the Japji recently appearing in the pages of the East and West from the pen of Dr. C. C. Caleb. We acknowledge our obligations to the author as well as to the editor.]

His dealings and His marks : Priceless His gifts and attributes." In all this sublime vision of God, the reader will also note the swift and exquisite touches of eager love and mysticism.

The need of love and devotion is described in the following poem —

"O man, entertain such love for God as the lotus hath for the water.

Such love doth the lotus bear that it bloometh,
even when dashed down by the waves.

The creatures which God created in water die,
if denied it, and therefore love it.

O man, how shalt thou be delivered without
love ?

God pervadeth the heart of the pious and bestoweth on them a store of devotion.

O man, entertain such love for God as the fish for the water.

The more it hath, the happier it becometh and the greater its peace of mind and body.

Without water, it could not live for a moment. God alone knoweth the sufferings of its heart.

O man, entertain such love for God as the chatak for rain.

Though the tanks be full and the earth drenched, it will not drink from either.

It shall drink the rain drops, otherwise it is fated to die"*

[*This and the following are taken from Nanak's poems translated by Macauliffe in his book on Sikhism Vol. I]

The same is embodied in characteristic poetry in the following poem :

" Friends have come to my house : The True One hath caused me to meet them.

* * * *

When I meet the saints, my soul is happy ; night and day my hearth and home look bright.

The unbeaten sound of the five musical instruments playeth since saints have come to my house.

Come, beloved friends,

Sing a song of rejoicing, O women,

Sing a true song of rejoicing ; then shall you be pleasing to God and rejoice through the four ages.

The Spouse hath come to my house, the place is adorned by Him.

His instruction hath adjusted mine affairs.

I applied the great salve of Divine Knowledge to mine eyes, and saw God's form which filleth the three worlds.

Meet me, O companions, sing with zest a song of rejoicing, since my Spouse hath come home to me.

My soul and body are bedewed with nectar : and in my heart is the jewel of Love.

In my heart is the precious jewel and I ponder on the Primal essence.

Thou art wise : Thou possessest Divine knowledge ; Thou art the searcher of hearts : Thou thyself didst create the world.

Listen, my friends, the charming Bridegroom hath fascinated me, and my soul and body are bedewed with nectar.

O Supreme Spirit of the world, True is Thy

play. True is Thy play, O Incomprehensible and Infinite One : Who can cause us to understand but Thee ?

Without Thee how many can call themselves Sidhs, strivers or wise ?

The Guru hath stayed the soul which was maddened with the misery of death.

Nanak, he who removeth his sins by the word, obtaineth God through his aggregate of merits."

Such love of God is a beatitude in itself

" Were rivers to become kine, and the springs to become milk and clarified butter,

Were the whole earth to become sugar so that the heart might ever rejoice ;

Were the mountains to become all gold and silver and be studded with diamonds and rubies ;

I would even then magnify Thee and the desire to do so would not cease as I spoke."

As religion consists in pure devotion and loving service, pilgrimages and ceremonials are a hindrance and of no use.

"God maketh Himself manifest and beholdeth men.

He is not pleased by obstinate penance nor by many religious garbs.

He who fashioned the vessel of the body and poured into it His ambrosial gifts,

Will only be satisfied with man's love and service.

They who, though ever reading, forget God's name shall suffer punishment,

And, notwithstanding their great cleverness,
undergo transmigration.

He who repeateth the Name and thus eateth
the food of fear,

Shall become a pious worshipper and be absorbed
in God.

He who worshippeth stones, visiteth places of
pilgrimage, dwelleth in forests,

And renounceth the world, wandereth and
wavereth;

How can his filthy mind become pure?
He who meeteth the True One shall obtain
honour."

"There is no impurity in songs, there is no im-
purity in knowledge; there is no impurity in
the moon's or the sun's different phases;

There is no impurity in corn, there is no im-
purity in ablution; there is no impurity in rain
which falleth everywhere, there is no impurity in
earth, there is no impurity in water;

There is no impurity contained in air.

There are no virtues, O Nanak, in the man who
is without a guru.

It is he who turneth away from God whose
mouth is impure."

The following poems preach true fear of God
and trust in Him.

"The fear of God is very great and very heavy.

Man's wisdom is of little account, and so is his
chatter.

Walk with the load of fear on thy head;

Meditate on the Guru who is kind and merciful.

No one shall be saved without the fear of God.

His fear doth adorn man's love. The fear of transmigration is burned away by the fear of God.

By fear, the Word is fashioned and decorated.

What is fashioned without fear is altogether worthless:

Useless is the mould and useless the stroke thereon."

"Thou art the Lord, to Thee be praise,

—All Life is with Thee.

Thou art my parent, I am Thy child,

All happiness is from Thy mercy.

No one knows Thy ends.

Highest Lord among the highest,

All that is from Thee obeys Thy will,

Thy movements, Thy pleasure,

Thou alone knowest.

Nanak, Thy slave, is a free-will offering unto Thee."

"The priest, the Sheikhs, and the potentates of the world are all beneath the Earth.

Emperors pass away, but God ever flourisheth.

There is only Thou,

There is only Thou, O God.

Neither the just nor the generous

Nor the seven regions beneath the earth shall remain.

There is One ; is there any other ?

There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God.

Not the regions of the sun and the moon
 Nor the seven continents, nor the seven seas,
 Nor corn nor wind shall abide.
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God,

Our maintenance is in nobody's power but
 God's.

To all of us but one hope abideth ;
 'There is One : is there any other ?
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God.

Birds have no money in their possession,
 They only depend on trees and water,
 God is their giver, There is only Thou !
 There is only Thou, There is only Thou, O God !"

The following poems are full of true mystic insight and poetry. In them is also to be found a great and intimate love of Nature and Her Beauty.

"All hail to the great month in which spring ever beginneth !

Ever and ever remember the Sustainer of the earth and thy heart shall rejoice.

O, silly Man, forget thy pride. Subdue thy pride and meditate on God in thy heart ; adopt, the most excellent virtues.

Good acts are the tree, God's Name its branches, religion its flowers, divine knowledge its fruit ;

Attainment of God its leaves, and the dispelling of mental pride its dense shade.

They who behold God's power with their eyes, hear it with their ears, and repeat the True Name with their tongues,

Obtain the full wealth of honour, and tranquilly meditate on God.

The great season hath come, be careful and do good-works.

Nanak, the pious, who continue absorbed in God, shall be perennial and never wither."

"The Sun and Moon, O Lord, are Thy lamps: the firmament Thy salver; the orbs of the stars, pearls enchased in it.

The perfume of sandal is Thy incense, the wind is Thy fan, all the forests are Thy flowers, O Lord of Light!

What worship is this, O Thou, Destroyer of Birth? Unbeaten strains of ecstasy are the trumpets of Thy worship.

Thou hast a thousand eyes and yet not one eye: Thou hast a thousand forms and yet not one form."

"The light which is in everything, is Thine, O Lord of light!

From Its brilliancy, everything is brilliant; By the Guru's teaching the light becometh manifest.

What pleaseth Thee is the real worship."

"When bronze, gold and iron break, the blacksmith weldeth them by means of fire.

When husband falleth out with his spouse, a reconciliation is effected in this world through children.

When the king asketh and his subjects give, a bond is established between them.

When the hungry man eateth, he establisheth an alliance with the world.

Drought formeth an alliance with rivers when they are flooded with rain.

There is an affinity between love and sweet words.

If any one speak truth, he formeth a bond with knowledge.

By goodness and truth, the dead establish a bond with the living.

Such are the affinities that are established in the world.

By praising God, man establisheth an alliance with God's Court.

Nanak sayeth this deliberately."

"God speaketh, preacheth, and listeneth ;
He who reflecteth on himself is a wise man.
The body is earth, the wind speaketh therein,
Consider, O wise man, what it is that dieth.
It is the quarrelsome and proud understanding.
The conscious soul dieth not.

The Precious Jewel, for which men go on pilgrimage, dwelleth within the heart.

Pandits read and argue but know not that which is within themselves.

When my spiritual ignorance dieth,
I die not myself.

He who is everywhere contained dieth not.
Says Nanak, when the guru showed me God,
No one seemed to me to die or to be born.

All seasons are good for those who love the True One.

The woman who knoweth her husband enjoyeth happiness day and night.

The ferryman calleth out at the ferry 'come on, make haste, you delay.'

I have seen at the other side those whom the Guru put into the boat.

Some have loaded their baggage, some have set out with it and others are weighed down by their loads.

They who have made true traffic are with the true God.

I am not good nor do I find any one bad.

Nanak, he who effaceth his pride is as the True One."

In the teachings of Nanak, morality holds a very high place. Few of India's, even of the world's, religions have laid down a more exalted moral code than is to be found in the pages of the *Granth*. Purity of life is set forth as the highest object of human endeavour. Nothing to which man can attain is more acceptable to God. Without it, even faith is unavailing. Loyalty, honesty, justice, mercy, charity and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid : while evil-speaking, covetousness, anger, selfishness, extravagance and cruelty are denounced with equal rigour. The daily practice of cleanliness, of almsgiving and of abstinence from animal food, is strictly enjoined and obedience to the guru is demanded of every Sikh as his first duty. But as

regards the last, it is but proper to acquit Nanak of the height and extravagance to which the doctrine was pushed in latter days.

NANAK AND AFTER

Nanak, as might be seen already, was simply a teacher of religion. Regarding his followers merely as disciples, he had no views of political advancement. As a preacher of peace and good-will to man, he told them "to fight with valour but with no weapon except the word of God." His care was to prevent his followers from contracting into a narrow sect or into monastic distinctions; proving this by excluding his son, a meditative ascetic, from the ministry after him, though he in the end became the founder of a sect called the *Udasis*, men indifferent to the world, who still exist in large numbers among the Sikhs. The religion thus established by Nanak differed in no wise from the one founded by Kabir and, but for great historical circumstances, would have developed into a quiet and quaker-like faith. The persecution of the growing faith, however, by the Mahomedans gave it a sharp military character; and when a century of cruelty and distress passed, there came to the guruship an intrepid and mystic youth who, fired with the indignities

inflicted on his people and filled with a noble patriotism and love of men, welded the Sikhs into a strong and powerful nation and made possible the establishment of a small yet historic republic, which along with the rise and consolidation of the Marathas, forms one of the most interesting and remarkable episodes in the history of modern India.

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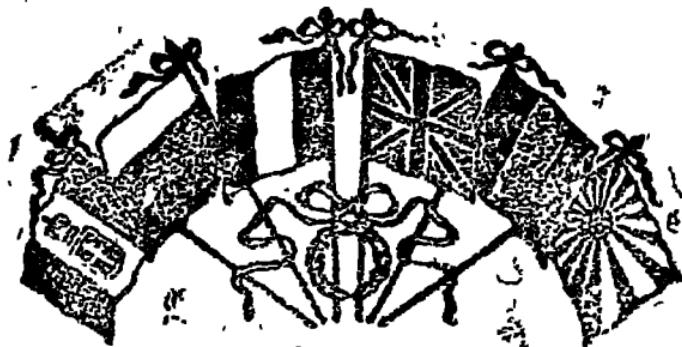
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